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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 DAKAR 001499

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SUBJECT: GUINEA-BISSAU: SECURITY SECTOR REFORM PLANS WILL
BE COMPREHENSIVE AND COSTLY

Classified By: Ambassador Janice L. Jacobs for reason 1.4 (b) and (d).

SUMMARY

11. (C) GOGB and international partners continue to focus on security sector reform as the top priority for improving stability. There is still no date set for round table talks to raise funds, which have been delayed several times already. GOGB has a vision, but no clear plan, of what reform should look like and Armed Services Chief Tagme Na Waie seems to share the vision. GOGB is consulting closely on security sector reform with international donors and civil society, most of whom agree that the main challenge is identifying enough funds to entice thousands of soldiers into early retirement. End Summary.

MONEY FIRST, PLAN SECOND

12. (C) A key goal of the security sector reform agenda is to purge ranks and attract higher quality recruits. Defense Minister Helder Proenca, like many top GOGB officials, is traveling to raise money for reform programs. In visits to Portugal, Brazil, and Spain he is requesting funds for construction of houses and other incentives to early retirement for some two thousand active duty soldiers. According to the Director General of the Budget, Romao Varela, the military has 5,108 men under arms and it wants to reduce this to approximately 3,000. (Note: This is significantly lower than previous GOGB and outside analyst estimates, which are closer to 25,000. End note). The Defense Ministry recognizes the need for a more educated, professional force and laments that only about 15% of soldiers are literate. Currently, the Ministry of Defense struggles every month just to pay food and salaries and barrack living conditions are reportedly abysmal.

13. (C) UNOGBIS Military Councilor, Col. Nelson Duarte, a Brazilian, accompanied Armed Services Chief Tagme Na Waie on his May trip to Brazil. Na Waie visited various Ministries but spent most time learning about military structure, doctrine, and traditions, all lacking in Guinea-Bissau, according to Col. Duarte. UNOGBIS -- which may shut down operations at the end of the year unless its mandate is renewed by the Security Council -- has proposed to assign a

small team of military technical experts in Bissau to train on these issues. So significant is the need that Col. Duarte estimates ten years will be needed for full transformation into a modern military. He believes Na Waie shares this vision for reform.

14. (C) Na Waie also recently visited Beijing, but the Chinese Embassy's Economic and Commercial Counselor, Gao Zhifeng, offered little information, other than to say it was just a protocol visit. He said China is not a player in security sector reform or military cooperation with Guinea-Bissau. Recent budgetary support from China was only to help prepare for the Community of Portuguese Speaking Countries (CPLP) Presidential Summit in Bissau July 17-19. In terms of cooperation, China is more focused on increasing rice yields and rebuilding a hospital in Canchungo.

15. (C) One difficulty GOGB has faced in scheduling a round table to raise funds from donor countries to support its reform agenda has been inability to pass a budget. An extraordinary session of the National Popular Assembly (ANP) is now required to vote on the budget, which includes a pledge of USD 15 million from the World Bank for physical infrastructure improvements. Guinea-Bissau does not conduct audits of military expenditures, which impedes U.S. support for the loan under U.S. law. Director General of the Budget Varela and Director of the Prime Minister's cabinet, Mario Filomeno are studying the current laws and structure under which such an audit could take place. Poloff is working with post's Information Resource Center to identify similar legislation from other countries that could help Guinea-Bissau come into compliance. The ANP, which should have authority for such audits, has little control over budgets in practice.

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COMMENT

16. (C) Regular consultations with an international steering committee of donors chaired by UNDP and with organized concerned citizens should ensure that Guinea-Bissau's plans for security sector reform will be well-founded and include key actors needed for buy-in. Na Waie's familiarization trips with professional military establishments are much needed, although many diplomats in Bissau are starting to look askance at the frequency of high-level GOGB official travels. Na Waie is an intelligent man, but has no formal education and his military experience is more appropriate to the battlefield than organizational management. Most observers, with the notable exception of the Portuguese Defense Attache who has a long history of alarmist and often inaccurate reporting, believe Na Waie has no other intention now but military reform. No price tag has been put on the reform package yet, but there is little doubt it -- and the stakes -- will be high.

JACOBS